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An investigation of adolescent boys' dispositions toward leisure reading

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Abstract

When children are very young, they seem to enjoy books. However, as they grow older, those positive feelings about books and reading begin to change for some students. Some studies agree that it is in middle school or adolescence that this change often occurs, and it most often occurs in boys. This study had two purposes: to investigate the factors that may influence adolescent boys' attitudes toward books and reading and their changes from elementary to middle school and to identify activities or events that evoke a positive response toward reading among adolescent boys.

This qualitative descriptive study gathered data from three seventh grade boys and their parents in focus groups and surveys throughout five weekly meetings. The researcher found that time spent independently reading decreased in some adolescent boys, and increased in others. The adolescent boys who participated in the study felt more positively about reading at the conclusion of the study than they did at the beginning. In addition, the boys gained additional reading practice and were exposed to genres, titles, or formats they might not have chosen to read on their own. The researcher summarized the findings for librarians, teachers and parents: teaching specific types of lessons, offering specific titles, formats, and genres of books; dedicating a specific time for reading throughout the day at school or at home; reading with snacks, pillows, pets; requiring reading at home; purchasing reading materials or taking trips to the library; and facilitating recommendations from friends.

AN INVESTIGATION OF ADOLESCENT BOYS' DISPOSITIONS TOWARD
LEISURE READING

A Graduate Research Paper
Submitted to the
Division of School Library Studies
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
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by
Julie Barnett
August 2014

This Research Paper by: Julie Barnett

Titled: An Investigation of Adolescent Boys' Dispositions Toward Leisure Reading

has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the
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ABSTRACT

When children are very young, they seem to enjoy books. However, as they grow older, those positive feelings about books and reading begin to change for some students. Some studies agree that it is in middle school or adolescence that this change often occurs, and it most often occurs in boys. This study had two purposes: to investigate the factors that may influence adolescent boys' attitudes toward books and reading and their changes from elementary to middle school and to identify activities or events that evoke a positive response toward reading among adolescent boys.

This qualitative descriptive study gathered data from three seventh grade boys and their parents in focus groups and surveys throughout five weekly meetings. The researcher found that time spent independently reading decreased in some adolescent boys, and increased in others. The adolescent boys who participated in the study felt more positively about reading at the conclusion of the study than they did at the beginning. In addition, the boys gained additional reading practice and were exposed to genres, titles, or formats they might not have chosen to read on their own. The researcher summarized the findings for librarians, teachers and parents: teaching specific types of lessons, offering specific titles, formats, and genres of books; dedicating a specific time for reading throughout the day at school or at home; reading with snacks, pillows, pets; requiring reading at home; purchasing reading materials or taking trips to the library; and facilitating recommendations from friends.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A toddler eagerly climbs on his mother's lap for their nightly bedtime story ritual. They read a well-worn favorite, *Goodnight Moon*, and the little boy chimes in gleefully on each page. Fast forward a bit. The child is now six, and he is in his First Grade classroom. He listens with interest to the book his teacher is reading about one of his favorite subjects, dinosaurs. When his class visits the school library later in the day, he asks for assistance in finding more dinosaur books, as the book he heard in the classroom piqued his interest, and he wants to continue investigating this subject. He finds a book a bit above his beginning reading level, but he knows his teacher or his parents will help him with words he doesn't know yet.

Proceed a bit further in time. The little boy is in fourth grade. He's a capable reader. He enjoys being able to choose books from the classroom library, and makes the most of the time his teacher gives him in reading class. He has found he enjoys the *A to Z Mysteries* series, and is eagerly working his way through the alphabet. He often talks to his family about the current mystery and reads frequently in his free time.

Travel through time once more. The young boy is now an adolescent. He is in seventh grade and sighs when his teacher tells the class to get out their free reading books. He reads a few words, looks around the room, asks if he can be excused to get a drink, reads a page or two, and keeps an eye on the clock until the teacher FINALLY announces they can close their books. When he is home, his father asks if he's visited the school library yet this week, and he says he just hasn't had time. Besides, there's nothing in the library he's interested in reading, anyway. He sits down and turns on the

television. What brought about this change? Is it his age? His interests? The activities he is involved in? Lack of time available to spend on reading?

Research Problem

When children are very young, they seem to enjoy books. They enjoy looking at the pictures, hearing the words read, and the warm feelings the act of having a book read to them evokes. But at what point do those positive feelings about books and reading begin to change for some students? Some studies agree that it is in middle school, or adolescence that this change often occurs, and it most often occurs in boys. In her investigation into the out-of-school reading habits of fifth graders, Sharon McKool (2007) lists after school activities, excessive television viewing, participation in after school activities, and chores as reasons cited by the students themselves for rarely reading outside of school.

Reading outside of school is a strong predictor of success in school. According to McKool (2007), time spent reading outside of school has “been tied to vocabulary development, fluency, comprehension, and general intellectual development” (p. 111). Similarly, Smith and Day (2013) found that “leisure reading improves readers’ attitudes, confidence, and motivation. By choosing their own titles and genres for leisure reading, adolescent children increase word knowledge and manifest a more positive attitude toward school overall” (p. 111).

Parental influence is another factor studied as influencing student success in school. In her study, McKool (2007) found that “more avid readers than reluctant readers, regardless of income, were read aloud to by their parents before they started school and had parents or siblings who read from books or novels for recreational

purposes on a daily basis” (p. 121). Smith and Day (2013) examined factors such as whether students were read to when they were young, whether they read at the same time as their family now, frequency of buying books and magazines, encouragement to read, whether they visited the library with their parents when they were young and now, and whether their parents read. The researchers found that “the effect of the mother’s educational level was significant, as it related to a child’s leisure reading” (p. 115). “How often a child reads was significantly lower for children whose father had no high school diploma versus a college degree and above...” (p. 116). Smith and Day (2013) concluded, “parents can, and are many times willing to, learn how they can help their children and themselves become better, more frequent readers” (p. 119).

Parents and teachers of adolescent boys, who play a crucial role in helping them succeed academically, may benefit from the findings of this study. They may gain insight into the reduction of time spent on leisure reading, helping them to implement changes in practice that could positively impact the adolescents. In addition, the students themselves may benefit from examining their own habits and attitudes, as well as those of their peers, and discussing ways they could improve on past practices. Future students may benefit from potential new knowledge gained by parents and teachers.

Research Study Purpose

This study had two purposes. First, it investigated the factors that may influence adolescent boys’ attitudes toward books and reading. Next, it sought to identify activities or events that evoked a positive response toward reading among adolescent boys. The results of the study may contribute to a greater understanding of adolescent boys’ resistance to reading.

Research Questions

1. What factors influence adolescent boys' attitudes toward independent reading?
2. How do boys' attitudes toward reading change from elementary to middle school?
3. What suggestions do adolescent boys offer as ways to make reading an attractive activity?

Assumptions and Limitations

Data to inform this study came from discussions within a focus group consisting of three boys entering seventh grade, a survey about reading habits given to the boys and the parents of the boys, planned reading activities, and an exit survey. The focus group meetings took place in a suburban Midwestern United States town. It was assumed that the findings of this study were typical of seventh grade boys in this locale. It was also assumed that the environment created by the researcher was conducive to the boys feeling at ease and comfortable discussing their feelings about reading. The study was limited to ten boys. A second limitation of the study was an acknowledgement of the potential for researcher bias. The respondents knew the researcher as a previous teacher. This former relationship may have compromised objectivity. Use of a structured interview is one technique to reduce this potential bias.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to examine the factors that influence adolescent boys' tendency toward reading independently, as well as identifying activities and environments that foster enjoyment in reading. The first subtopic explores boys and their reading habits. The second subtopic examines how reading motivation improves reading outcomes. The third subtopic investigates parental influence on readers, while the fourth subtopic analyzes the influence of readers' advisory on the reading habits of boys.

Boys and Reading

As a secondary school librarian, Bev Harrison (2012) observed that “boys borrow fewer and fewer books as they progress through school and that this trend is particularly dominant in Year 13” (p. 41). She focused her study on how 13 year old boys can be encouraged to read for pleasure on a regular basis. To answer this question, she focused on two strategies and asked the following questions: “In what ways does speed-booking encourage Year 13 boys to read for pleasure? How does book buying and the creation of a reading community encourage reading among Year 13 boys?” (p. 42). Harrison invited boys in two Year 13 English classes to complete a survey about reading, as well as participate in the study and class activities. Twenty boys volunteered to participate and returned the parent consent forms. To compare the results, the boys in a Year 13 statistics class who did not take part in any of the activities were also asked to complete the survey about reading. Eleven boys participated in the comparison group.

The first activity the boys took part in was an exercise called “speed-booking,” in which they were divided into four groups per class. A selection of books was placed on

four tables, and the boys were given five minutes to peruse the books on the table. After five minutes, they could choose one book from the table and moved on to a new table to look through those selections. At each subsequent table, they could choose to keep the previously chosen book or trade it for one from that table. At the end of the session, they could check out any books that they wanted to read, but were not required to do so.

A second activity involved four boys accompanying the researcher to a local bookstore. They were given a budget of \$100.00 to spend and were allowed to choose any books. When the books had been processed for library use, they were asked to promote the books to their classmates.

Four boys representing a range of interests and abilities were selected for a third activity in which they were interviewed about their reading habits. Upon completion of all of the activities, library records were examined for the period of the inquiry. Borrowing statistics from before and after the intervention were analyzed to see if there was an increase in borrowing after the interventions, as well as which interventions resulted in more borrowing. These figures were also compared to the borrowing records of the boys in the statistics class who did not take part in reading activities.

Statistical evidence gathered from borrowing records indicated that “Year 13 boys were borrowing substantially fewer books than in previous years. This was true of both groups of students (English classes and statistics class). This was confirmed by both the surveys and the in-depth interviews with the boys” (Harrison, 2012, p. 43). Researcher observations of frequency of visits to the library further confirmed the trend.

After the speed-booking and book-buying interventions, “overall borrowing statistics for this period indicate that 46 books were borrowed in a period of three weeks

by all Year 13 boys as opposed to 176 over the previous seven months. The significance is further illustrated by considering that in a similar three-week period earlier in the term, 13 books were issued to Year 13s” (p. 43). Other findings resulting from the surveys and interviews include that boys read a wide range of material, frequently including online reading. They are usually able to find material of interest in the library. The most frequently cited reason for reading less was time constraints, including academic and sporting commitments, as well as socializing.

In conclusion, Harrison (2012) found that it is possible to encourage boys to read for pleasure “by tapping into their interests and creating a student-centred [*sic*] environment in which they have a greater sense of involvement and connection” (p. 45). In addition, “in order to connect with the peer culture of this age group, it is necessary to adopt a less traditional interpretation of literacy and accept that multimedia literacies can have considerable benefits for teenagers” (p. 45). One shortcoming of this study is the potential for the Hawthorne Effect wherein the novelty of the activities spurred student interest. A follow-up study of these boys’ reading behaviors after a lapse of six months or more would reveal the endurance of the effect.

Citing studies that show adolescent boys lagging behind girls in reading achievement, Amanda Bozack (2011) examined “the literacy motives, beliefs and practices of boys in a single-sex high-school setting and how those motives and practices relate to academic achievement” (p. 58). Additionally, the study attempts “to address teachers’ concerns about the boys’ reading practices in relationship to their schoolwork achievement. This study is the first step in that collaboration. It is an opportunity to

develop a more informed perspective of students' motives, beliefs, and reading practices prior to the identification and implementation of teacher intervention strategies" (p. 58).

The question posed by the researcher, "What, if any, relationship exists between reading motivation as measured by the HSLPQ responses and student achievement?" (p. 62) based the High School Literacy Project Questionnaire on Wigfield's influential 1997 Motivation for Reading Questionnaire.

Data were collected in the spring of the 2008–2009 academic year at a Catholic, all-boys high school in the Northeast. Using student questionnaires, teacher questionnaires, and student achievement tests, 330 students in grades 9, 10, and 11 and eight English teachers provided data to two faculty researchers and a graduate assistant. Student achievement data was based on scores on standardized tests for grades eight and nine in the content areas of reading, math, English, and science.

In analyzing the data, Bozack (2011) found, "the achievement data suggest that reading scores are related to achievement across content areas" (p. 68). The study demonstrated that boys were most often motivated by interest, recognition, aesthetic enjoyment, and reader identity, with interest scoring highest. Bozack concluded, "the HSLPQ appears to be a reliable and valid instrument for measuring a wide range of motivational constructs in high school boys" (p. 69). The use of this instrument also showed that

teachers' ability to help students identify themselves as readers is a more straightforward task and a much more inviting entry point for teachers with limited literacy backgrounds. For the student participants in this study, the responses suggest that they generally report positive beliefs about reading. A relationship between students' identity as readers and their beliefs is present, but encouraging teachers to overtly acknowledge and validate that identity may strengthen students' endorsement of in-school reading. (Bozack, 2011, p. 69)

Robin Boltz observed that girls scored higher on reading comprehension standardized tests in almost every country tested. She concluded that reading proficiency is a result of more frequent reading and stated, "...we are failing to make readers of our sons" (Boltz, 2007, p. 1).

These findings prompted a study that examined two aspects of boys and their reading habits. First, she sought insight into the attitudes boys had about reading in general, as well as their thoughts about their reading education. Second, she examined the types of reading material both boys and girls would choose if given a choice.

For part one of the study, thirty-five boys, aged ten to thirteen, were included in the main sample group. The students were from four fifth-grade classes at a rural elementary school in north central North Carolina. The racial composition of the group was nineteen white, twelve African American, two Hispanic (both native Spanish-speakers), one Asian, and one biracial (p. 6). All interviews were conducted by the researcher, and all were asked the same set of questions. The questions posed by interviewers sought students' self-assessment of themselves as readers, descriptions of their reading preferences, their perceptions of reading among adults in their lives, their attitudes toward reading tests, and their school experiences with reading.

For the second part of the study, the four classroom teachers implemented a free writing session, created by the researcher, in which sixty-nine boys and girls participated. The prompt was, "If you could read anything you wanted for your next reading assignment (not just a book, but a magazine, a Web site, a newspaper, or anything you choose as long as you are reading and can tell me about it) what would you read and why?" (p. 6).

After part one of the study, Boltz found that although 71% of the group tested as proficient in state standardized reading testing, only 14% identified themselves as proficient. This led Boltz to surmise that if they felt better about their ability, they may be willing to practice more, and therefore achieve more (p. 7). When asked if they like to read for pleasure, the majority of answers indicated that they will read if the material is interesting to them. "Having books and materials available is not enough. Only when they have the choice to read something that speaks to them and holds their interest will they choose to read, and, by extension, become more proficient" (Boltz, 2007, p. 8). Other findings included the following: boys see reading as educational, not for enjoyment; they would rather play active games than read; non-fiction, comics, and graphic novels were their favorite things to read; most could not list a favorite book or author; the vast majority felt that reading would be important to them as an adult; 35% said the men in their family read; and they had many suggestions about what would make reading more enjoyable for them. Games or activities to go with the books, partner reading, and watching the movie after reading the book were all suggested, but overwhelmingly, the most prevalent answer was to give them choice in what they read.

For the second part of the study, in which students wrote what they would like to read and why, the majority of boys, 62%, said they would like to read books. Among the books, non-fiction, graphic novels, and fantasy novels were listed; 12% of boys said they would like to read magazines, and 26% desired websites. In comparison, 42% of girls chose books, 27% chose magazines, and 31% chose websites.

The prevalence of narrative fiction in classrooms may not be serving students best. Boltz found that boys acknowledged the importance of reading to their grades, but didn't

feel reading assignments were helpful or personally relevant to them. They felt that in their future, their purpose for reading will not be enjoyment and will include various types of nonfiction and media. (Boltz, 2007, p. 14). Contrary to some opinions, boys do like to read. They enjoy being given the opportunity to read in class. “Interest in the material is key, as is self-selection of materials” (p. 15).

Reading and Motivation

Many teachers and parents alike have long been interested in the effects of motivation on reading practices. Numerous studies have been undertaken in the last several decades attempting to pin down such a seemingly elusive trait. In 1971, Edward Deci conducted one of several subsequent studies on external rewards’ influence on intrinsic motivation. “One is said to be intrinsically motivated to perform an activity when he receives no apparent rewards except the activity itself” (p. 105). Deci based his study on whether giving an external reward for something one is intrinsically motivated to do changes the intrinsic motivation toward the activity. After a series of experiments, Deci (1971) came to the conclusion that external rewards do indeed alter the effects of intrinsic motivation on performing activities. Sometimes the rewarded behavior did continue after the rewards were stopped, however, leading to the belief that some external rewards can help to promote desired behaviors.

A seminal piece in the study of motivation as it pertains to reading was developed and standardized by Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, and Mazzoni (1996) in the Motivation to Read Profile (MRP).

Motivation is an integral component of reading instruction. In addition, a number of studies suggest a connection between motivation and achievement. Current motivational theory emphasizes the role of self-perceived competence and task value as determinants of motivation and task engagement. The Motivation to Read

Profile was developed to provide teachers with an efficient and reliable instrument for assessing reading motivation by evaluating students' self concept as readers and the value they place on reading. In addition, the assessment instrument provides both quantitative and qualitative information by combining the use of a survey instrument and an individual interview. (Gambrell, et al., 1996, p. 532)

The MRP was based on a review of various studies regarding motivation. Some criteria used in developing the questions included applicability to grades two through six as well as all teaching approaches. It needed to be suitable for group administration and accurately reflect motivation (p. 525). After the questions were compiled, it was given to several veteran teachers to assess. Only questions with 100% approval were included in the instrument. In addition to the reading survey, Gambrell et al. (1996) provided the teachers with instructions for administering the survey as well as a scoring guide to assess student motivation regarding reading. Based on the results of the survey, teachers could then administer an individual Conversational Interview. Suggestions for using the results of the Reading Survey were given as well. Suggesting books of particular interest to individual children, reading engagement interventions, finding meaningful purposes for reading, cooperative class reading projects, Parent/Child reading programs, and library activities are some of the proposed ideas for increasing motivation in individual areas. Gambrell et al. provided a framework that has been subsequently used or adapted in numerous studies regarding reading motivation.

One such adapted study is based on the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile, or AMRP, designed by Pitcher et al. (2007). Beginning with the question, "Do adolescents read?" the researchers worked as a team to revise the MRP and use it to assess adolescents. The purpose of the study was based on the idea that understanding what

motivates teens to read could be the key to improving reading instruction at the secondary level.

Using research about adolescents and personal experience, the team of researchers revised the language of the MRP to appeal to teens. Some language was changed. For example, “When I grow up” was revised to read, “As an adult.” An item on race or ethnicity was added to help understand differences and similarities in populations. The group added some questions regarding the students’ feelings about reading in class, questions about use of technology, literacy practices at home, and nonacademic literacy. The original MRP reading survey scoring directions and scoring sheet were used to score the AMRP. The interviewer decided whether individual or small-group interviews were appropriate (Pitcher et al., 2007).

Eleven researchers at eight sites administered the AMRP reading survey and conversational interview to teens from different school settings including public, charter, alternative, and government-sponsored schools and in a variety of geographic areas of the United States (West, Southwest, Northeast, Midatlantic, and Southeast) and the Caribbean. Surveys were administered to 384 adolescents and approximately 100 were interviewed. Of the 384 students who responded to the survey, approximately 22% identified themselves as African American, 37% were Caucasian, 30% were Afro/Indo-Trini (from Trinidad and Tobago), 10% were classified as “other,” and 1% of the respondents did not specify an ethnicity. Additionally, some of the students interviewed identified themselves as Hispanic. Early adolescents (grades 6–8) accounted for 43.8% of the sample, middle adolescents (grades 9–10) comprised 35.2 %, and late adolescents

(grades 11–12) comprised 21% of the sample. Fifty-four percent were female; 46% were male.

The results of the study (Pitcher et. al, 2007) showed that females across all groups valued reading more than males, with female value of reading increasing with age, while male value of reading decreased with age. Students' self-concepts as readers and their value of reading generally matched their reading choices and overall enjoyment of reading. The preferred mediums of reading were varied, and included magazines, newspapers, and the Internet. Friends and family members were considered very influential in determining what adolescents read, through recommendations, sharing, talking about or reading articles together, or purchasing for one another.

Teachers were also reported to be influences on adolescent reading. "The interview participants discussed how teachers' excitement about reading, knowledge of various authors, and enjoyment of certain books affected their own reading...Some students reported that they discovered their 'most interesting story or book read recently' from a teacher..." (Pitcher et al., 2007, p. 393). In answering the question regarding something their teachers had done in reading that they really enjoyed, students emphasized the teacher allowing them to choose the books they read. Choice in topic and format of assignments was also valued. The teacher taking into account student preferences in assignments was recognized as well.

Based on the results of the adolescent surveys, the researchers concluded educators should do the following in order to best motivate their students:

- recognize the multiple literacies in which students are engaging in outside of the classroom and find ways to incorporate them into classroom instruction;
- model our own reading enjoyment;
- embrace engaging activities, such as literature circles and book clubs, into regular instruction in secondary schools;

- include reading materials of varied formats, levels, and topics in the classroom;
- incorporate elements of choice in readings and projects. (Pitcher et al., 2007, p. 395)

The AMRP demonstrates that adolescents can be motivated to read a wide variety of materials, and realize the importance of doing so. They have a desire to read, and when given some ownership and responsibility of choice, they look forward to the opportunity.

Parental Influence on Readers

Parents are their child's first teachers. This opinion is held by many educators as well as parents and has been the source of educational studies of various types over the years. In her doctoral dissertation, Christina Williams (2012) undertook a study of parental influence as it pertains to literacy skills. As the studies reported above have reflected, if an adolescent boy doesn't have adequate literacy skills, they generally participate less in reading activities, as they find them challenging and less desirable than other activities. Because literacy skills begin before children enter school, it follows that parents are the most influential factor in early literacy skills. The act of reading to children can be very beneficial, and is thought to lead to the enjoyment of reading. Williams asserts, however, that readers cannot simply read the story but must also consider the importance of conversation about the story, examination of the pictures, voice inflection, letter-sound-word connections, and prediction as important to literacy acquisition. "...there is more to literacy acquisition than just the reading of the story. There is a difference between a parent who engages a child in a story and one who is just reading the words" (p. 16).

Research indicates that parents of successful readers: (1) want their children to succeed; (2) impart a sense of importance of education and have high expectations for their children; (3) impart a love for reading and value reading together; (4)

like, enjoy, and respect their children and are willing to spend time, money, And effort to nurture literacy; (5) believe in the adage that the parent is the child's first teacher; (6) know what's going on at school and in their child's literacy life; (7) believe they can have an impact on their child's literacy development; (8) provide literacy artifacts, especially children's materials in their home, often simple and inexpensive; (9) read to their children often; (10) serve as role models as readers themselves; (11) provide effective literacy interactions which assist their children in learning how to construct meaning from text and to interact successfully in school settings. (Williams, 2012, pp. 26-27)

Williams examined family-provided literacy supports that may impact literacy achievement. Using AIMSweb (<http://www.aimsweb.com>), a nationally normed web based assessment and data management reporting system, Williams created a student group whose AIMSweb benchmark results indicated that they entered school performing at a Tier 1 level: no remedial instruction needed. This information was compared to information from students who scored within the median range and Tier 3 students for whom remedial instruction was required (p. 2). The case study involved twelve first grade children. Two boys and two girls identified as performing in Tier 1, two boys and two girls identified as performing in Tier 3, and two boys and two girls identified as a median group. The parents of the twelve students were interviewed to determine the types and frequency of literacy practices that took place in the homes until the time of the study. The reported activities were then compared to best practices according to literature, as well as to the students' literacy skills. (p. 51).

The participants of this sample included two African-American parents, one Hispanic parent and the other nine participants were white. All parents were middle-class adults, and they volunteered for the study (p. 54). The questions asked in the study explored parents' perceptions of their influence on their own children's reading.

After compiling the results of the interviews with parents, Williams found that all of the parents of the high achieving students saw themselves as their child's first teacher, while none of the medium or low achieving students' parents indicated this affirmatively. Only two of the parents felt they had assumed the role of reading role model. All of the groups scored high in the area of desiring success for their child, with the median group scoring highest. As a group, parents of students in the higher achieving student groups engaged in more parent-initiated activities (p. 135). Based on the findings of the study, Williams concluded that parent-promoted literacy events positively impact students' literacy achievement. Parent-encouraged literacy events, such as reading together, appear to impact students' attitudes and proficiency in literacy development (p. 141).

In conclusion, Williams summarized the results of the study, observing, "Parents of high achieving students read with their children more, invest in their children with their time, money and effort, and they provide their children with effective literacy interactions. One possible explanation for parents engaging in these activities with their children may involve parents' view of themselves as their children's primary teachers" (p. 150). Do parents of young children need to see themselves as their child's first teacher in order to effectively help their children attain literacy skills? While these findings are based on a small population, this study indicates that they do. Parents of median and low achieving students may benefit from being taught to engage in literacy activities with their children (p. 151).

Another study that focused on the literacy learning of young children was designed by Olivia Saracho (2007) to assist fathers of five-year old children to develop their literacy learning in a family environment (p. 351). The role of fathers in the literacy of

their children has been thought to have influenced the amount of reading their children participate in outside of school, but few studies had been done to illustrate their influence clearly. Literature indicated that fathers participated in the literacy learning of their children when given interesting opportunities. This case study focused on identifying activities that were different than those used with mothers.

The participants were 25 fathers, their five-year old children in public kindergartens, and five of the children's teachers. The fathers attended a three-hour literacy workshop twice a week for a five-month period. The teachers participated in a five-month training program and implemented the fathers' literacy program (p. 352).

The teachers provided the fathers with a literacy program they could use in their home environment. Observations, photographs, work samples, interviews, field notes, and videotapes were used to support the findings of the study. Fathers were interviewed at the beginning and the end of the study. Fathers and their children were videotaped interacting with each other. Fathers demonstrated literacy activities of their choice to the other fathers and the teachers (Saracho, 2007).

In their chosen demonstrations, Saracho (2007) noted that each father had a unique approach to the activity, through their use of family situations, community ties, the way they interacted with their child, and how they chose to present the activity. Also of note to the researcher, the children often imitated their fathers' literacy behaviors. Fathers modeled reading and writing behaviors for their children, and discussed that reading was important, necessary for information, and enjoyable. Literacy experiences were made meaningful to the children through their fathers' relating them to their daily lives. The fathers used a variety of writing activities with their children, which helped them to see

the relationship between oral and written language. The children dictated or wrote stories about their families, communities, or experiences. “These themes demonstrated the meaningfulness that the fathers felt about the literacy program. Because of this meaningfulness, it is expected that their literacy activities will continue well beyond the life of the program” (p. 355).

The study provided some positive actions for fathers in supporting their child’s literacy development. First, fathers were involved in school activities regarding literacy, a place most often filled by mothers. Next, the fathers demonstrated techniques and positive interactions with their children. They had hands-on experiences, and built a foundation of learning based on common interests with their children. “The literacy strategies and activities seemed to be mutually beneficial to both fathers and children. They built a bond between them and helped children learn that reading is for enjoyment and information” (p. 355). Fathers can and should play a significant role in their child’s literacy learning, and schools would benefit from helping families nurture this type of relationship.

In her multi-faceted study, Sharon McKool (2007) also studied the extent that parental influence affects out of school reading habits. The research questions that guided the study focused on differences between avid and reluctant readers’ economic backgrounds, attitudes toward reading, home lives, and social influences.

Fifth-grade students from two schools were surveyed, with a subset of those being interviewed, to determine whether or not there were differences between avid readers and reluctant readers in a variety of areas. Statistical data were gathered for questions 1 and 2. Questions 3 and 4 were answered in individual interviews.

Of the 199 fifth grade participants in this study, 105 were female and 94 were male; 133 were European American, 41 were Hispanic, 13 were African American, 8 were Asian American, and 1 was Native American. Seventy of these participants were considered low income and 152 were considered middle or upper income students. Data came from journals and memos, students' activity logs, surveys, reading achievement information, free or reduced lunch status, and interviews.

In examining only the results pertaining to parental influence, McKool found that more middle and high income students were read aloud to when they were young compared to low income participants. More avid readers than reluctant readers were read aloud to by their parents before they started school, and had family members that read on a daily basis for recreational purposes. Avid readers from all economic groups indicated that their parents were the greatest influence on them as readers. "This study suggests that when children come from homes where they are read aloud to and where voluntary reading is modeled on a regular basis, the likelihood that children will choose to read voluntarily increases" (pp. 121-122). The type of voluntary reading modeled is also important. Reluctant readers reported seeing family members reading the newspaper or materials for work, but avid readers reported seeing family members reading novels or materials associated with pleasure reading. "This study suggests that if parents want to raise children who voluntarily choose to read, then they must show the importance of reading for pleasure by modeling reading themselves and by reading a variety of materials at home including books and novels" (p. 123).

One aspect of a middle school reading study by Smith and Day (2013) investigated the influence parental educational level and leisure reading habits had on

their adolescent children. The study involved middle school children in North Carolina, with a racial breakdown of 38.1% white, 19.5% black, 40.1% Latino, and 2.3% other. A survey asking questions regarding their leisure reading habits was used for data collection.

The researchers found that the educational level of the mothers “was significant, as it related to a child’s leisure reading” (p. 115). It was found that books and magazines were purchased less frequently by mothers with no high school diploma versus those with a college degree and above. How often a child was read to when they were young, as well as how often they visited the library with their parents were also significantly lower in this group. The time a mother with no high school diploma spent reading was also lower than those with some college credit, or a college degree or above. The number of books a family owned was significantly lower in families in which the mother had no high school diploma, as well as how many magazines a family subscribed to.

The findings were the same in families in which the father had no high school diploma, compared to some college credits or a college degree or higher. How often a child reads was significantly lower in these households, as well as how often books, magazines, and magazine subscriptions were purchased. How often a child was read to by his or her parents, how often they visited the library, and how many books they owned directly correlated with the educational level of the father.

The researchers concluded that parents with no high school diploma are more likely to live in poverty. Children become more likely to engage in reading practices before entering school as the parents’ education level rises. When parental reading habits showed they valued reading and learning, the children were more likely to do the same.

As a result of this study, the researchers recommend that teachers do the following:

1. Provide daily opportunities for students to read self-selected literature.
2. Provide reading materials that are appropriate for both genders (males are often left out).
3. Encourage the reading of nontraditional materials (Web sites, graphic novels, magazines, newspapers, etc.).
4. Provide parents (especially those with less education and racial/ethnic minorities) with tools to help their children become willing readers (reading discussion tips, library nights, reading lists).
5. Hold community nights to assist in the dissemination of reading materials and encourage parents to use the skills they have to assist their children in reading.
6. Provide regular library time.
7. Hold periodic book talks.
8. Provide high-interest/low-level materials on a wide variety of topics.
9. Offer book club opportunities (pp. 118-119).

The study found that children who were read to by their parents were better readers. Therefore, the researchers made the following recommendations for parents:

1. Read to and with children, regardless of the age of the child.
2. Provide positive male role models in reading materials, especially for male children.
3. Visit the public library frequently.
4. Talk to children about what they are reading.
5. Turn off electronics and read as a family for 30 minutes four times a week.
6. Create a literacy-rich home full of books, magazines, and other reading materials.
7. Be involved in the children's schools.
8. Talk to the children's teachers to learn about books, children's interests, and other ideas for encouraging reading.

Better, more frequent reading can be taught by parents, who are often willing to help their children and themselves.

Readers' Advisory

Many of the studies noted in this literature review have indicated the importance of capturing the interest of boy readers to promote reading for pleasure. Farris, Werderich,

Nelson, and Fuhler (2009) compiled a list of books that appeal to boys. In asking the perennial question, “What do boys want to read?” they conducted a study with the purpose of both examining the reading preferences of fifth grade boys, and motivating inner-city boys to read.

The study was conducted in the Midwestern United States. Elementary teacher education candidates from the local university were paired with 16 boys. A collection of books, based on recommendations from teachers, children’s literature experts, and lists of award-winning literature book lists, were provided to the boys. Additional criteria used in book selection included text features to support reading (i.e., built-in questions, repetitions, pictures, sidebars, and references). Such features lend themselves to capturing the visual interest of nonreaders. Selections were also based upon each book’s likelihood of being an ‘entry point book,’ those reading materials that grab boys and result in their learning the joy of reading” (Farris, et. al, 2009, p. 182). To provide new, enticing experiences for the boys, they were provided with a laptop on which they corresponded with their University partners. They sent dialogue journal entries via e-mail, in which they discussed the aspects of the books they liked or disliked, or asked questions of their partner. The data collected in the study included printed e-mail correspondence, transcripts of interviews and discussions, and notes from classroom observations and reflections.

After compiling and analyzing the data, Faris et al., (2009) were able to come to some conclusions about what captures the interest of adolescent boys. First, they discovered that boys do judge books by their covers. If the book “looks good”, they make their selections based on the cover of the book. Examples include “dangerous, life-

threatening activities such as depicted in *Dive: The Deep* and *Dive: The Discovery*, by Korman” (p. 183). When thumbing through the books, those with generous margins and easy to read fonts were also found to be appealing. Other factors, including “visual features such as captions, photographs, and illustrations throughout the book, books that were part of a series or by a favorite author, characters with believable flaws, fact books with photographs or drawings, and books that made connections to previous learning” were all noted as influential when boys were selecting books (p. 184).

Utilizing their findings, Farris, et al. (2009) compiled a list of books that met the established criteria for appealing to boys. “...Armed with the right knowledge, teachers can place an appropriate book into the hands of almost any boy reader...When considering how this project affected the boys’ reading, the classroom teachers agreed that it increased their interest in reading” (p. 185).

Emily M. Childress-Campbell (2013) further explored the concept of children’s readers’ advisory in her study. A librarian, if unfamiliar with the child he/she is helping to advise, must find out information about the child, such as reading level, parental preference, reading history, and communication skills.

Utilizing tips suggested by Heather Booth in *Serving Teens Through Readers’ Advisory*, Childress-Campbell noted that actively listening, possessing a demeanor that shows interest in discussions about reading, making reading history and potential reading choices sound appealing, and reading teens’ body language to determine when to approach them for a readers’ advisory interview are all important factors in communicating with teens (Childress-Campbell, 2013).

While Childress-Campbell (2013) noted best practices with regard to children and teens, she sought to study children's readers' advisory with regard to best practices. Her study was designed to reveal how children's readers' advisory methods conform to or differ from best practices noted in literature, as well as barriers or difficulties encountered, and successful strategies practiced by librarians with regard to children's readers' advisory.

The qualitative study consisted of interviews of eight children's librarians who had experience in providing readers' advisory to children. The interviews ranged in length from twenty to thirty minutes and took place in the participants' setting. The questions focused on demographics, readers' advisory in practice, and difficulties in providing advisory services. Each interview was audio recorded, transcribed, and sent to each participant to check for accuracy. Themes were identified and coded, and data written in narrative format (Childress-Campbell, 2013, p. 14).

All librarians were full time employees, seven had master's degrees, and two worked only in youth services. Years of experience in providing readers' advisory services ranged from four to nineteen years (Childress-Campbell, 2013, p. 15).

Results of the study revealed that the librarians all started the advisory interview with questions about the reader's interests, or about the reader's age/grade level/reading level. Other types of questions involved the reason they needed the book, how quickly they needed to be able to finish the book, or what book they had recently read and enjoyed (Childress-Campbell, 2013). In addition, the librarians felt that reading children's literature was a very important part of the advisory service. One librarian said, "A major part of readers' advisory is actually knowing the books" (p. 19). Another

observed, "...I really want to make sure that people have read and read for fun because they make the best recommendations" (p. 19). Other reasons cited for reading books included being able to better describe characters or elements the children would like, becoming familiar with particular genres, and having knowledge of appropriateness for certain age groups. After determining what type of book they think the children will like, most librarians in the study went to the shelves to find some books to show the children. If the librarians felt unfamiliar with certain types of books, they consulted booklists, professional journals, and websites, including Amazon.com and Goodreads.com (p. 23). One of the challenges mentioned by all of the librarians was finding books at certain reading levels. If a child didn't know his/her reading level, or required a certain level of book, such as Accelerated Readers, then the librarians felt the children or parents were too preoccupied by the level, causing them to either limit themselves or become frustrated by the difficulty. Among the librarians interviewed, five of eight mentioned difficulties recommending books based on appropriateness of content, and five of eight noted differences in recommendations based on gender. One librarian observed, "With boys I'll take them to more than anything else...the nonfiction and the graphic novels, because those are the two that pull the interest more" (p. 31).

When asked about specific best practices with regard to children's readers' advisory, none of the librarians surveyed could cite specific practitioners or methods. Among their ideas about best practices, specific types of questioning about interests, making eye contact with the children, talking with the child and not the parent, and "letting them know it's okay if they don't like what you suggest" were mentioned (Childress-Campbell, 2013, p. 32). The findings suggest that although best practice

methodology wasn't specifically cited, children's readers' advisory practices conform to best practices as outlined in literature. The study provided a greater understanding of children's readers' advisory through conversations with librarians who participate in the service on a daily basis.

Summary

In examining boys and leisure reading habits, the research showed that adolescent boys borrow fewer books than they had previously, read for pleasure less frequently, and often lag behind girls in reading achievement. Based on the results of the studies presented, allowing boys freedom of choice in reading materials, offering genres and topics that interest them, parental involvement in and modeling of reading activities from a young age, more frequent reading and writing opportunities, and utilizing readers' advisory can all be effective ways to increase reading motivation and achievement in adolescent boys.

This study explored the factors that influenced motivation and attitudes toward reading in a small group of boys in a suburban Midwestern United States town. The approach utilized in this study differs from the research cited in that the boys will help to determine the reading materials and activities in which they will participate. In a focus group discussion, the boys were invited to offer suggestions about the books they'd like to read, as well as the introductory and follow-up activities they feel would interest them. This study analyzed a combination of the factors explored in the research—motivation, interest, parental influence, and readers' advisory—and examined all variables as a whole. This methodology differs from other approaches, and will offer new insight into reading motivation in adolescents.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Some parents and educators believe that as young boys approach adolescence, they lose interest in reading. The research has suggested various possible factors that may have an influence on boys' leisure reading habits, including motivation, parental influence, and readers' advisory. This study examined those three components in combination to see if they are factors influencing the reading habits of a small group of adolescent boys. In addition, this study offered suggestions from the boys themselves about what may be positive contributing factors in boys' dispositions toward leisure reading.

Research Design

The design of this study was descriptive in nature. As defined by Wildemuth (2009), a descriptive study is "conducted for the purpose of understanding a phenomenon or setting that is...too complex to take in with just a superficial observation of it" (p. 27). Two reasons cited by Wildemuth for undertaking a descriptive study are to understand a phenomenon in more depth, and "to understand a particular phenomenon for the particular purpose of using that understanding to improve a system's or program's design" (p. 28). The researcher sought a deeper understanding of the factors affecting adolescent boys' motivation to read independently, and will use that understanding for the purpose of improving reading dispositions in home and educational settings.

It was assumed that the boys involved in this study were representative of a population of boys entering seventh grade in a suburban Midwestern United States town. Additionally, it was assumed that the researcher created an environment in which the

boys were able to answer questions and discuss topics freely and honestly in the group setting. A limitation of this study is that the findings are dependent on the interpretation of the data by the researcher. A second limitation is the small sample size.

Population

The population for this study was drawn from volunteers from a class entering seventh grade. An e-mail detailing the study and the methodology was sent to the parents of all boys entering seventh grade in a suburban Midwestern United States town. The population of the town is about 4,000, with about 33% under the age of 18, 61% between the ages of 18 and 65, and 6% over age 65. Families make up 75% of households. The racial makeup of the city is 96.5% white, with African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic and Latino Americans comprising the remainder. The participating school was a Middle School with an enrollment of 525 students in grades five through eight. The first volunteers, up to ten, who submitted a signed permission form were entered into the study.

The researcher received Institutional Research Board approval from the Office of Sponsored Programs at the University of Northern Iowa, as well as informed consent from parents and assent from the participants in the study. The researcher also received a letter of cooperation from the participating school.

Sources of Data

This study employed two sources of data: a focus group and surveys. Powell and Single, as cited by Jordan and Wildemuth (2009), defined a focus group as, “a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research” (p. 243). The focus

group method was chosen by the researcher because of its strengths in studies in social sciences. One strength of focus groups is that individuals in the group can compare their views with others in the group, agreeing or differing in viewpoint. The researcher is able to directly observe similarities and differences in participants' views, rather than inferring them from individual statements. A second strength of this method is that the forming of opinions and attitudes is social in nature. In hearing the opinions of others, views can be shifted, clarified or adapted. Its corresponding weakness could be that the views of some may be altered by group participants, changing the results of the data. Focus groups are also an efficient way to generate new ideas. In the same amount of time it may take for one individual interview, many different ideas on a topic could be generated. A limitation in this area could be that with shorter, quicker individual contributions, ideas may not be as fully developed as they would be with individual interviews (Jordan & Wildemuth, 2009).

While focus groups can provide the sole source of data in a study, they are a stronger tool when used with another method, such as a survey (Jordan & Wildemuth, 2009). The researcher chose the survey method in conjunction with the focus group because it “supports the collection of a variety of data, including the beliefs, opinions, attributes, and behaviors of the respondents” (p. 242). In addition, surveys are a common, familiar method of data collection, thus alleviating difficulty or confusion on the part of the respondents. Using the research questions and study purpose as a guide, the researcher designed the survey instruments to ensure effective data collection and analysis. The survey instruments were comprised of both open-ended and closed-ended questions.

Both the focus group and surveys are conducive to qualitative analysis of content. As Wildemuth and Zhang (2009) state, “Qualitative content analysis does not produce counts and statistical significance; instead, it uncovers patterns, themes, and categories important to a social reality” (p. 312). A balance between description and interpretation is necessary when presenting qualitative analysis of results. The interpretation of data represents the researcher’s personal understanding of the study.

The instruments used over the course of five weekly summer reading meetings with the students in this study consisted of a student survey (Appendix A); focus group discussion questions (Appendix B); a parent survey (Appendix C); a schedule of books, discussion questions, and activities (Appendix D); and a student exit survey (Appendix E). These instruments were chosen by the researcher in order to draw more valid conclusions. Analyzing data obtained from various methods is an approach called triangulation, in which data from one instrument can be used to cross-check findings from another data source (Wildemuth, 2009, p. 161).

Data Analysis

The researcher used the conventional qualitative content analysis method, in which “coding categories are derived directly and inductively from the raw data” (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009, p. 309). The participants’ surveys were analyzed for responses which indicated dispositions toward reading and motivation. The focus group discussion responses were tallied for frequency of responses to various reading dispositions. The research questions regarding influencing factors toward reading motivation, attitudes about reading, and suggestions to make reading an appealing activity guided the researcher in directed content analysis, which “starts with a theory or relevant research

findings. Then, during data analysis, the researchers immerse themselves in the data and allow themes to emerge from the data” (p. 309).

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

A number of studies have been performed analyzing various influences on the reading habits of adolescent boys. The purpose of this study was to focus on three of those factors: motivation, parental influence, and readers' advisory. Using the books and activities outlined in Appendix D, as well as surveys and focus group questions found in Appendix A, Appendix B, Appendix C, and Appendix E, the researcher conducted a qualitative content analysis, focusing on responses which indicated dispositions toward reading.

Data Sources and Collection

Five boys entered the study, however, two failed to attend the first two weekly sessions, and after the researcher brought the books used in the activities to their homes, they indicated a desire to leave the study. Three boys completed the five week study, attending all sessions, reading all books and completing all activities. Data were gathered at each weekly session. The Student Reading Survey was completed by the participants at the first weekly session. The Parent Survey was sent home with the participants to be completed by their parents and returned in a sealed envelope, provided by the researcher. The focus group questions were discussed a few at a time over a three week period. The Exit Survey was completed by the participants at the final session.

Findings

Student 1, Student 2, and Student 3 referred to themselves in the reading survey as "an OK reader", "an OK reader", and "a good reader" respectively. Their parents considered their sons "an OK reader", "a very good reader", and "a good reader"

respectively. When asked how much time they spend reading outside of school each day, the students responded with “more than 30 minutes”, “less than 15 minutes”, and “30 minutes”. Their parents answered the same question, indicating their sons read “15 minutes”, “15 minutes”, and “more than 30 minutes” respectively.

What Factors Influence Adolescent Boys’ Attitudes Toward Independent Reading?

The first research question, “*What factors influence adolescent boys’ attitudes toward independent reading?*” was asked in various ways in the surveys and focus group discussions. Answers given by the boys and their parents included many factors (see Table 1).

Table 1

Factors That Influence Reading

Boys’ Responses (Number of responses)	Parents’ responses (Number of responses)
Interesting book choices (3)	Interesting book choices (3)
Way friends feel about reading (3)	Promoting reading through book purchases or borrowing from libraries (3)
Subject matter of books (2)	
Perception that reading is important or very important (2)	
Perception that he is a good or very good reader (1)	
Not assigned—free choice (1)	

The answer given most often, by all three boys and all three parents, was the availability of interesting book choices that he liked. All participants indicated that if a book didn’t interest them, they did not exhibit a positive attitude toward reading.

Another answer cited by all three boys as an influence on their reading attitudes was the way their friends felt about reading. The three boys mentioned that their best friends think reading is “fun” or “OK to do”, and that their friends recommend or discuss reading

specific books. Two boys indicated that subject matter of books influenced their attitude about reading them. One student and one parent mentioned attitudes about reading were less positive when the reading was assigned.

The mediums mentioned most often by the boys as evoking a positive attitude toward reading were websites, non-fiction books, and fiction books, respectively. The participants and their parents indicated purchasing or checking out from the library books that were chosen by the boys helped to create positive attitudes.

How Do Boys' Attitudes toward Reading Change from Elementary to Middle School?

The second research question, "*How do boys' attitudes toward reading change from elementary to middle school?*" indicated that both the boys and their parents did notice a change in attitude from elementary to middle school. Table 2 shows boys' and their parents' perceptions of attitudinal changes.

Table 2

Perceptions of Changes in Attitude toward Reading

Boys' Perceptions of Changes	Parents' Perceptions of Changes
Student 1: Reading was "kind of hard for me" in elementary; but it was "an interesting way to spend time". Now I understand the books and can connect with them." "If there's nothing else to do I read on my Kindle."	Spends the same time reading now as in elementary; now reading is "hard to fit in"
Student 2: When in elementary, reading was "a great way to spend time" and "very easy for me". Now "technology and electronics distract me, so I read less."	"We required him to read more in elementary, but as he became busier with activities and homework we didn't require as much."
Student 3: In elementary, reading was "a boring way to spend time" and "very easy for me". The amount of reading now has increased because "I want to finish my book."	"He reads more now because he likes to read and learn."

One student noted that in elementary school, while he felt that reading was “an interesting way to spend time”, it was “kind of hard for me”. He also indicated that he spent less time reading in elementary school than he does now, saying, “If there’s nothing else to do I read.” He went on to say, “Now I understand the books and can say most things about them.” The participant’s parent answered that their son spent about the same amount of time reading in elementary school and middle school. The parent indicated that the participant did participate in extra-curricular activities, and said that “reading is hard to fit in sometimes when practice is later.”

The second student said he reads “less—a lot less” now than he did in elementary school, citing advancements in technology, specifically gaming. “Technology and electronics distract me,” he noted, and answered that he read more than 30 minutes a day in elementary school, and less than 15 minutes a day currently. He said reading was “a great way to spend time” and “very easy for me”. His parent also noted that he spent 30 minutes a day reading in elementary school, and currently spends 15 minutes a day reading, saying “We required 15-30 minutes of reading a night in elementary school, but as he became busier with activities and homework we didn’t require as much reading.” When asked if extra-curricular activities may allow less time for independent reading, the parent answered, “Yes, it does cut into reading and school work. Extra activities are a challenge to manage with school and family time.”

The third student indicated he currently spends “maybe a little more” time reading than he did in elementary school, “but I’m more into gaming now.” He said he read for 15 minutes each day in elementary school, and currently reads 30 minutes a day,

“because I want to finish my book.” His parent indicated he read for 15 minutes a day in elementary, while he reads for 30 minutes in middle school, stating “he reads more because he likes to read and learn.” The parent went on to say that although the participant does participate in clubs and activities, they do not take away from time spent reading independently “because it is something he likes.”

In the focus group discussion, factors that the boys suggested take away time from reading were playing with friends, staying up late in the summer, babysitting, gaming, activities, and chores.

What Suggestions do Adolescent Boys Offer as Ways to Make Reading an Attractive Activity?

The third research question, “*What suggestions do adolescent boys offer as ways to make reading an attractive activity?*” provided insight into what adolescent boys would like to see offered at school and elsewhere. The ideas were brought up in the focus group discussions, where ideas could be generated and built upon by all participants in the group.

The first factor discussed that makes reading an attractive activity was giving boys the option of choosing their own reading materials. When books were assigned, they were seen as less attractive than those chosen by the student himself.

A “book project” was suggested, in which the students would be allowed to tell their classmates and teachers what they would like to read, or have read and recommend. Then various activities could take place using those books. “Ideal Bookshelf” was an idea implemented in a classroom that appealed to the participants. They were able to draw the bookshelf with the book spines showing, list their all-time favorite titles from

any grade or level on the spines, and then present about why those were their favorite books.

A reading party was described. Students would be allowed to bring a pillow and blanket, snack and drink, and choose a spot around the room to simply “hang out and read” for a long period of time. Building on the idea, a mystery party was suggested, during which the students read mystery books and participate in solving the mysteries around the school. Other “party” ideas proposed were reading games on the computer, and reading with their pets they’ve brought to school.

One student indicated that he enjoyed literature circles in school, in which the students were assigned roles in the group, such as “discussion director” or “word wizard”. When assigned books were read, the literature circles would then discuss and write about the books. A second student indicated that the literature circles were an acceptable way to participate in reading activities, while the third student noted that he disliked the practice.

Reading non-fiction in social studies and science classes was cited as an interesting way to learn the material. Having an uninterrupted block of time during the school day to be spent on reading for pleasure was noted by the group. Being allowed to read at school on the computers or electronic reading devices was also recommended.

Favorite series, genres, and formats discussed included fantasy books; graphic novels; disaster books; Poke’mon, Hunger Games, Swindle, Harry Potter, Wings of Fire, and Alex Rider series; art books; comic books; books about WWII, Vietnam, and Korea; mysteries; and non-fiction about favorite bands or actors.

Choosing new books from a bookstore, book fair or other source was suggested as an enjoyable way to make reading an attractive activity. The participants fondly described specific occasions in which they were allowed to shop for books, and explained that choosing anything they wanted from a large selection was a very appealing activity.

Table 3 shows the boys' suggestions.

Table 3

Suggestions to make reading an attractive activity

Suggestions for activities	Suggestions for time blocks	Suggestions for devices	Suggested titles, genres, formats
Student 1: Book project, reading party with pillows, blankets, snacks, mystery party, literature circles	Nonfiction books during Social Studies and Science classes, uninterrupted block of time to read during school each day	Kindle Fire, computer	Fantasy, fiction, newspaper, mysteries, favorite band or actor
Student 2: "Ideal bookshelf", reading party with pets	Uninterrupted block of time to read during each school day, reading during study hall	Computer, Nook	Disaster books, nonfiction, Hunger Games, WWII, Vietnam, Korean Wars
Student 3: Reading games on the computer	Uninterrupted block of time to read during each school day, allowed to read while on the computers	Computer	Poke'mon, Swindle series, Harry Potter, Wings of Fire, Alex Rider, art books

The written Exit Survey given in the last reading group session indicated that a summer reading group can in fact encourage reading outside of the school setting. Student 1 said he had read 5 books so far during summer break—the number assigned in the reading group. Student 2 had read 7 books, and Student 3 had read "a lot" of books during the five week period that the study took place.

Student 1 said his reading skills had “improved a little this summer”, while Student 2 and Student 3 both indicated that their reading skills had “improved a lot this summer”. This would indicate that the boys felt the reading practice they gained during the summer was beneficial to them. All three students indicated since participating in the club, they enjoy reading “more than” before. Students 2 and 3 said that they read books that they probably wouldn’t have read on their own.

When asked whether they enjoyed the club, all three students said yes. They were then asked to list specific things they liked about the club. Their answers included “making the book trailer”, “the snacks”, “the director”, and “everything”.

The students were asked what suggestions they had to make the club better. Student 1 said “more games”. Students 2 and 3 said “nothing”. They were also asked what books they would suggest for a future club. Student 1 said *Swindle*. Student 2 said WWII books, and Student 3 said *The Red Pyramid*. Concluding the survey, the students were asked if they would recommend the reading club to their friends. All three students answered yes. When asked if they would participate in the club again if given the opportunity, all three answered yes.

The adolescent boys who participated in this study were very forthcoming in their opinions about reading and reading activities. They provided insight into what they do or do not enjoy about reading in school, at home, or elsewhere. Just as some previous studies indicated, they demonstrated that, in many cases, pleasure reading does occur less frequently in adolescence, because of factors such as extra-curricular activities, more homework, or more opportunities to participate in other activities, such as electronic games or spending time with friends.

They indicated that parents do in fact influence their habits, either by requiring a certain amount of reading each day, or through modeling of reading behavior, purchasing reading materials, or giving reading materials as gifts. Parental dispositions toward reading do appear to influence the reading dispositions of their sons.

Through insight offered in this study, teachers and parents of adolescent boys now know some of the influences on adolescent boys' attitudes toward independent reading, how their attitudes toward reading change from elementary to middle school, and have some specific ideas about what the boys would like to read, how they would like to participate in reading activities, and how they learn best, all of which help to make reading an attractive activity. Some specific titles, as well as genres and formats of reading materials provide information that can be used to motivate adolescent boys to read more. In a comprehensive assessment of the boys' reading group, the researcher concluded that choosing books that are interesting to adolescent boys, planning activities that include movement, interactive research or investigation, and engagement are successful ways to encourage independent reading.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Problem

This study sought to provide insight into the influences on the reading habits of adolescent boys. It focused on the factors of motivation, parental influence, and readers' advisory. It sought to answer three questions:

1. What factors influence adolescent boys' attitudes toward independent reading?
2. How do boys' attitudes toward reading change from elementary to middle school?
3. What suggestions do adolescent boys offer as ways to make reading an attractive activity?

Conclusions

This study found that several factors influenced adolescent boys' attitudes toward independent reading. Consistent with the literature reviewed for this study, the factor cited most often by the boys and their parents was the availability of interesting book choices (Boltz, 2007; Childress-Campbell, 2013; Farris, Werderich, Nelson & Fuhler, 2009; Harrison, 2012; Smith & Day, 2013). If the boys were given choices of books that appealed to them, they declared that they were much more likely to read independently.

The opinions that their friends hold about reading is another factor cited often by the boys. If their friends enjoy reading, talk about the books they've read, or listen to book recommendations from one friend to another, the boys are more likely to want to read themselves. This was also consistent with the literature reviewed for this study (Harrison, 2012; Pitcher, et.al, 2007).

Other factors cited by the boys as affecting their attitudes toward reading were the perceptions that reading is important and that they are good readers. Of the three boys studied, two perceived reading as an important activity, and only one said he was a “good” reader. Two said that they were “okay” readers.

These factors lead the researcher to several conclusions. In order to motivate adolescent boys to choose to read independently, they need to be given choices that appeal to them. The types of books they listed as the most interesting and most sought after are non-fiction, mystery and suspense, or books in a series, such as *The Hunger Games*, *Swindle*, *Harry Potter*, or *Alex Rider*. Graphic novels, art books, and disaster books were listed, as well as books about favorite actors, singers, or bands.

What their peers think about reading is important to adolescent boys. If their friends choose to read, talk to them about reading, and enjoy reading, these boys spoke more highly of reading as well. In addition, boys need to feel that they are “okay” or “good” readers in order to choose reading more often. If they feel successful and accomplished in reading, they are likely to want to participate in that activity more often. The Exit Survey completed at the end of the boys’ reading club indicated that all three students felt their reading had improved and that all three students enjoyed reading more than before participating in the club. This reading club appears to have helped the boys feel successful and accomplished in reading.

In studying how boys’ attitudes toward reading have changed from elementary to middle school, the researcher determined that dispositions toward reading do often change, but in varying degrees and in different ways. Student 1 indicated that he spent less than 15 minutes a day reading in elementary, but spends more than 30 minutes a day

now. He stated that reading was “kind of hard for me” in elementary, but now he “connects with the books”. Student 2 answered that he read more than 30 minutes each day in elementary and that it was “very easy for me” then. Currently he reads less than 15 minutes each day, giving the reason that “technology and electronics distract me”. Student 3 said he read 15 minutes a day in elementary, stating that “it was very easy for me.” Currently he reads 30 minutes a day “because I want to finish my book”.

In conclusion, these answers indicate that although time spent independently reading does decrease in some adolescent boys, it increases in others, for reasons such as becoming more skilled at reading as they get older, increasing interest in books, or competition from electronics or other choices of activities. Using answers provided by the boys about what motivates them to read could provide teachers and parents with ideas to encourage reading in adolescent boys. Suggestions for teachers, librarians, and parents include:

- Teaching specific types of reading lessons
- Offering specific titles, formats, and genres of books
- Dedicating a specific time for reading throughout the day at school or at home
- Reading with snacks, pillows, pets
- Requiring reading at home
- Purchasing reading materials or taking trips to the library
- Facilitating recommendations from friends

Adolescent boys offered suggestions for what makes reading an attractive activity for them. These suggestions included specific types of reading lessons, titles of books they most like to read, and the importance of making reading an activity that is given a

dedicated time throughout the day. In addition, enjoyable accompaniments, such as having snacks, pillows, or even pets make reading a rewarding experience.

These suggestions indicate that parents and teachers do have the ability to make reading an attractive activity for adolescent boys. The activities suggested aren't expensive or time consuming. They are simply designed to help students perceive that reading can be fun and as valuable a way to spend their time as any number of other activities.

Recommendations

This study found that the adolescent boys who participated in the study felt more positively about reading at the conclusion of the study than they did at the beginning. In addition, the boys gained additional reading practice and were exposed to genres, titles, or formats they might not have chosen to read on their own. They offered suggestions for activities they would find or have found to be engaging or interesting. The students made suggestions for librarians to use when ordering books that would appeal to adolescent boys. They indicated they would not only participate again themselves, but they would encourage their friends to participate as well. This information can be used by teachers and librarians to design and offer reading clubs for adolescent boys. Parents can use this information to help them determine whether a reading club would be beneficial for their son.

The scope of this study was limited by the number of participants. Future studies could be improved by a larger sample of participants. More boys participating would increase the number of ideas and suggested activities provided, as well as the list of the suggested books. In addition, the participants in this study all indicated that they were

either “OK” or “good” readers. Future studies could focus on only boys who see themselves as “poor” readers, or those who have difficulty reading. A follow-up study could include utilizing the ideas and book suggestions of the current participants to create a reading club for new participants. Their assessment of the books and activities would indicate whether or not those suggestions could be generalized to a larger group.

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APPENDIX A
STUDENT READING SURVEY

STUDENT # _____

1) Reading a book is something I like to do.

- a. Never
- b. Not very often
- c. Sometimes
- d. Often

2) I read _____.

- a. not as well as my friends
- b. about the same as my friends
- c. a little better than my friends
- d. a lot better than my friends

3) My best friends think reading is _____.

- a. really fun
- b. fun
- c. OK to do
- d. no fun at all

4) I tell my friends about good books I read.

- a. never
- b. almost never
- c. sometimes
- d. often

5) I have read a book my friend told me about.

- a. never
- b. almost never
- c. sometimes
- d. often

6) I am _____.

- a. a poor reader
- b. an OK reader
- c. a good reader
- d. a very good reader

7) Knowing how to read well is_____.

- a. not very important
- b. sort of important
- c. important
- d. very important

8) I think reading is _____.

- a. a boring way to spend time
- b. an OK way to spend time
- c. an interesting way to spend time
- d. a great way to spend time

9) Reading is_____.

- a. very easy for me
- b. kind of easy for me
- c. kind of hard for me
- d. very hard for me

10) When I was in elementary school, I thought reading was_____.

- a. A boring way to spend time
- b. An OK way to spend time
- c. An interesting way to spend time
- d. A great way to spend time

11) When I was in elementary school, reading was_____.

- a. Very easy for me
- b. Kind of easy for me
- c. Kind of hard for me
- d. Very hard for me

12) If your opinion about reading changed between elementary school and now, why do think it changed? (Please answer on the back of this page)

13) As an adult, I think I will spend _____.

- a. none of my time reading
- b. very little time reading
- c. some of my time reading
- d. a lot of my time reading

14) When I am in a group talking about what we are reading, I _____.

- a. almost never talk about my ideas.
- b. sometimes talk about my ideas.
- c. almost always talk about my ideas.
- d. always talk about my ideas.

15) When I read out loud I am a _____.

- a. poor reader
- b. OK reader
- c. good reader
- d. very good reader

16) When someone gives me a book for a present, I feel _____.

- a. very happy
- b. sort of happy
- c. sort of unhappy
- d. unhappy

17) I spend _____ reading each day.

- a. less than 15 minutes
- b. 15 minutes
- c. 30 minutes
- d. more than 30 minutes

18) When I was in elementary school, I spent _____ reading each day.

- a. less than 15 minutes
- b. 15 minutes
- c. 30 minutes
- d. more than 30 minutes

19) If you spent more or less time reading in elementary school than you do now, why?

20) Do you read any of the following? (Circle as many as you read)

- a. Newspapers
- b. Magazines
- c. Websites
- d. Non-fiction books
- e. Fiction books

APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) Do you find reading material you like in the library (school or public)? What materials do you check out from the library?
- 2) What reading material would you like to see in the school library?
- 3) Where else do you find reading material?
- 4) Do you think you read more or less than you did when you were younger?
- 5) What are some of your earliest reading memories?
- 6) What factors have influenced how much you read for fun?
- 7) What are some things that get you really excited about reading?

- 8) How much time do you spend reading electronic materials (websites, Kindle, Nook, phone, etc.)? What do you read electronically? Do you have a computer or e-reading device at home?
- 9) Have any of your teachers done something with reading that you've really enjoyed?
- 10) In what class do you most like to read? Why?
- 11) In what class do you find reading to be most difficult? Why?
- 12) What are some ideas/activities you think would make reading more enjoyable for you or for your friends?
- 13) Do you share and discuss books, magazines, or other reading materials with your friends outside of school?
- 14) Do you share and discuss books, magazines, or other reading materials with your family? What are some specific things you do?
- 15) What are some reading activities that occur in your family?

(Some questions on the survey and focus group instruments are from the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile, Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996).

APPENDIX C**PARENT SURVEY****STUDENT #_____**

Please answer the following questions based on your son's reading habits. All surveys will be noted in the study only by their assigned numbers; your number corresponds with your son's numbers. In order for you to be able to answer honestly and freely about your opinions regarding your son's reading abilities, please do not share your answers with your son and send it with him to our next meeting sealed in the enclosed envelope. Thank you for the time spent considering reading habits and motivation for this study.

1) My son is _____ reader.

- a. a very good
- b. a good reader
- c. an OK reader
- d. a poor reader

2) My son spends _____ reading each day.

- a. less than 15 minutes
- b. 15 minutes
- c. 30 minutes
- d. more than 30 minutes

3) When he was in elementary school, he spent _____ reading each day.

- a. less than 15 minutes
- b. 15 minutes
- c. 30 minutes
- d. more than 30 minutes

4) If your son reads more or less now than he did in elementary school, why do you think that is?

- 5) What do you think motivates your son to read? Please continue any answers on the back if necessary.

- 6) What types of reading materials does your son read? Please list all that come to mind.

- 7) What do you think your son's opinion of reading is?

- 8) What are some of the earliest reading activities you or other members of your family participated in with your son? What age was your son?

- 9) What, if any, are some things you or members of your family do currently to promote or encourage reading habits in your son?

- 10) How much reading do you and any other members of your family do on a daily basis?

- 11) Where does your son get reading materials? (Library, book store, retail store, book orders, websites, subscriptions, or any other sources used) Please be specific about the types of purchases or checkouts, noting occasions or reasons for the purchases or checkouts.

- 12) Does your son participate in extra-curricular activities? If so, how many hours a week? Do you feel these activities may allow less time for independent reading?

APPENDIX D

SCHEDULE OF BOOKS, DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, AND ACTIVITIES

Week 1:

The researcher will welcome everyone to the Boy's Summer Reading Club. All members will introduce themselves, and a brief explanation about the structure of each week's activities will be given. The researcher will hand out the student reading survey, allow time to complete. As the students finish, they can browse the library. When all surveys have been turned in, the first book, *Treasure Island*, by Robert Louis Stevenson will be introduced by the researcher. The students will be asked what they know about the book, any characters they may have heard of, what they think the setting is, when the book was written, what they think a "classic" means, and any other information they may want to share with the group. The researcher will write down any predictions or observations made about the book to revisit in Week 2. The researcher will explain that Stevenson conceived of the idea of *Treasure Island* (originally titled, "The Sea Cook: A Story for Boys") from a map of an imaginary, romantic island idly drawn by Stevenson and his stepson on a rainy day in Breamar, Scotland. Stevenson had just returned from his first stay in America. He was an enthusiastic traveler. The boys will each be given a book to read throughout the week and finish by the next week's club. Students will be invited to wear pirate attire to the next week's club if desired. Break for snacks. With the time remaining, the focus group discussion questions will be asked. The discussion will remain on each question until the students no longer have anything further to add to that question topic. Any questions not asked during Week 1 will be asked in Week 2.

Week 2:

Welcome/social time for the first few minutes. Discussion about *Treasure Island*. Allow everyone to make up a pirate name for themselves to be called during club this week. Researcher will bring out the sheet of predictions, and discuss whether or not the boys were right about each one. Discuss literary terms such as setting and plot.

Questions:

1. Did you know that *Treasure Island* was originally published as a serial novel? What were serial novels? How and why were serial novels a phenomenon in the Nineteenth Century?
2. How does the description of the old buccaneer on page 1 differ from your image of a typical pirate? How is it similar?
3. The old buccaneer seems like a man with many moods: sullen and quiet; nervous and scared; raucous and wild; furious and menacing. Which do you think are the buccaneer's truest feelings? Why?
4. Why does Dr. Livesey remain so calm when the old buccaneer threatens him?
5. What is the Jolly Roger?

6. Turn to page 59. "He made himself the most interesting companion, telling me about the ships that we passed by, explaining the work that was going on, and every now and then telling me some little anecdote of ships or seamen." Did you understand all of the vocabulary in that sentence? If not, did you use context clues to help you figure out what it meant? What does it mean?
7. Discuss the meanings of three more vocabulary words, reading them in context: mutiny (p. 88), conduct (p. 88), treacherous (p. 130).
8. Why does the author withhold the narrator's name until page 12?
9. Why does Jim cry when the Captain dies but not when his father died?
10. What's found in Billy Bones's pockets? What's in the chest? What do these objects tell us about the old buccaneer?
11. Why does Jim leave his fainting mother on the bank?
12. What kind of leader is Pew? How do the others feel about him? How do you know this?
13. The men in his command despise Pew, not only because he's physically violent but also because he's verbally demeaning. Rewrite the scene on pages 26-29, so Pew is more persuasive and less verbally abusive. How do you think the pirate crew might have responded if Pew were a more considerate leader? Why?
14. How does the tone of the doctor and the squire's conversation change after Dance leaves? Why?
15. What criteria does the squire have for putting a crew together? Why does he trust Long John Silver?
16. Long John Silver uses slang that would be easy for other sea-going men to understand. What about his language makes sense to you? What confuses you?
17. Which of the ship's men would you choose as your friends? Why?
18. In the course of a paragraph, Jim goes from a young man playing at sea to a potential hero. Was there a time you had to grow up all at once?
19. What do you suppose really happened to Mr. Arrow?
20. How is Stevenson able to let us know that Jim has been stabbed and Hands has been shot without telling us specifically?
21. What are the men angry about? How does Silver respond to the men's accusations? Is his response effective? How does Dick's status in the group change as a result of this process? Why does Silver give the black spot to Jim? Why has he kept it?
22. How does the idea of treasure affect Long John Silver's behavior? What visible changes does Jim notice in Silver?
23. The characters in the novel have differing degrees of morality. Which characters have higher moral standards? Which have lower moral standards? How do the differences between the two groups affect their actions? Their choices? The consequences of the two?
24. What is the most powerful symbol in the novel? Of hope? Of fear? Of death?
25. Did you enjoy reading this book? Why or why not? Do you think it is worthy of its place among the classics? Can you believe it was written about 150 years ago?

(Some questions from
<http://www.penguin.com/static/pdf/teachersguides/treasureisland.pdf>)

After wrapping up discussion of *Treasure Island*, the next week's book, *Airborn*, by Kenneth Oppel will be introduced. Student predictions about the book will be recorded to jumpstart discussion the next week. Students will be invited to bring ideas about activities to supplement the book discussion the next week, if they choose to do so. Break for snacks. With time remaining, the researcher will continue the focus group discussion questions.

Week 3:

Welcome/social time for the first few minutes. The researcher will then revisit the predictions from the week before, and discuss which aspects the students were correct about. The researcher will then lead the discussion about the book.

Questions:

1. When does *Airborn* take place: in the past, present, future, or a fabrication of one of these times? What clues help you decide? Why do you think the author sets the story in this time period?
2. *Airborn* mentions three kinds of flying machines: airships, balloons, and ornithopters. How do these vehicles stay aloft? Read about the history of dirigibles, zeppelins, and hot-air balloons. (Researcher will ask where they can find this information, and help guide a short research session, led by the sources the boys choose) Who was Leonardo da Vinci and what does he have to do with ornithopters?
3. What is hydrium? Is it real? Where is it found in the story and what functions does it serve, both for good and evil? What are goldbeater's skin and Aruba gas? Are they real and what are their uses?
4. On numerous occasions, Matt is the first crew member to spot various threats to the aircraft and to the voyage itself. List these instances and explain why Matt is so capable and observant. How is Matt mature for his age?
5. Matt often describes the Aurora in anthropomorphic terms, and he also compares himself to various animals. Find examples of both descriptive devices in the novel. What do they reveal about the way Matt thinks? How do they help you better visualize what is happening?
6. On several occasions in *Airborn*, Matt disobeys the orders of his captain. Think about these choices and the motivations behind them. Is Matt a hero? Do you trust his judgment? Would you recommend him for the Airship Academy?
7. Matt's peers on the airship are Kate, Baz, and Bruce. Discuss the relationships among these four young people and the valuable lessons they learn from one another.
8. In what ways does Matt's father's death determine Matt's future and affect his choices? How does Matt resolve his internal struggle over the loss of his father?
9. Compare and contrast how the following characters speak and communicate: Captain Walken, Mr. Rideau, Chef Vlad, Miss Simpkins, Kate de Vries, Vikram

Spirglas, Mr. Crumlin, and Rhino Hand. How does each character's style of communication reflect his or her personality?

10. Compare the maturation and changes of the crippled cloud cat to the ways that Matt grows in the story. How might either character be considered the novel's hero?
11. Kate is a strong character who often surprises Matt with her knowledge, fortitude, courage, and spunk. Together they make a winning team—although not without some frictions. Discuss this blossoming friendship, its potential pitfalls, and its possible future direction.
12. Author Kenneth Oppel is intrigued with flight, both in this series and in other books he has written. In what ways does flying impact the plot of the story and the development of the characters? What constraints and advantages does being airborne place on people and events?
(Questions from www.harperteen.com)
13. Did you like this book? If so, there are two more books in the series, and our library has them! This book has been compared to *Treasure Island*. Do you agree? In what ways is it the same? Different?

With time remaining, the boys will have the opportunity to bring up any additional discussion points they were thinking about, as well as offer ideas about activities the group could work on together. Snack break. The next week's book, *Chasing Lincoln's Killer*, by James Swanson will be introduced. Read brief introduction to the book by the author that begins with, "This story is true." Explain how the author "hooks" us with those statements, and makes us anxious to continue reading. Predictions will be noted, and students will be invited to be thinking about book trailers for any of the three books read so far. What would be a good "hook"? What are the main points a brief book trailer would want to portray? What would be a good cliffhanger for each to entice viewers to want to read the books?

Week 4:

Brief welcome/social time. The researcher will revisit the predictions from the previous week, discuss.

Questions:

1. Why do you think the author included the prologue in the story? How is this a good summary of a long and complicated war?
2. Why is John Wilkes Booth so angry? How did his plan reach beyond Lincoln? How did Booth's career as an actor influence his plan for the assassination? How did it also help with his escape? Describe his treachery on that fateful night in April, 1865.
3. What happened at the home of Secretary of State William H. Seward. How was the attack more brutal than the plan?

4. Evaluate the escape plans of the conspirators. What helped and hindered their escapes? Who aided them? In your opinion are people who aid criminals as guilty as those who commit the crimes or not?
5. Who was Edwin Stanton? What decisions did he make after the assassination of Lincoln? Does he act with more leadership than new Vice President Johnson? Does he take his authority too far? Did you consider his treatment of Mary Todd Lincoln cruel?
6. What part did Mary Surratt and Dr. Samuel Mudd play in the assassination? Do you think they both deserved to hang for their crimes? Who else assisted but was not brought to justice?
7. How did Powell stumble into the authorities' hands? Who else was arrested early on? Were some innocent people wrongly accused?
8. Who is Thomas Jones? How does he support Booth and Herold? How does his intimate knowledge of the Potomac become necessary?
9. Why was Booth surprised by the reactions to the assassination in the D.C. newspapers? How had the tide of opinion changed about the president?
10. Did John Wilkes Booth plan his escape carefully? Why did he encounter so many mishaps?
11. How were the Garretts duped into helping John Wilkes Booth and David Herold? In the end, how did they end up aiding the Union troops in their pursuit of these most wanted outlaws?
12. What happened to John Wilkes Booth in the end? What were his last words? How has he been immortalized in Washington, D.C., as well as Lincoln himself? How can we discourage this honoring of the person who committed such evil? How does this apply today?

(Questions from <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plan/discussion-guide-chasing-lincolns-killer>)

The researcher will read aloud the interview with the author, found at the website listed above, inviting discussion from the boys throughout. The next week's books, *Shackleton and the Lost Antarctic Expedition*, by Blake Hoena, and *Who Was Ernest Shackleton?*, by James Buckley Jr. will be introduced. The first is a graphic novel and the second a short biography, enabling the boys to be able to read both in one week. Predictions will be discussed and noted. Snack break. With the time remaining, the group will then move into the adjoining computer lab and begin work on making book trailers for the three books read thus far. Led by the researcher, the boys will divide into three groups, decide which book their group will work on, and work step by step on making a book trailer.

Week 5:

Brief welcome, social time. The researcher will ask the boys' opinions about the two books read this week. Predictions will be revisited, discussed. The boys will be asked to lead the discussion this week, asking the group any questions they can think of, or bringing up any points they feel were interesting and educational. Snack break. After the discussion, the group will go to the computer lab, where the researcher will show them a

website about the Shackleton expedition, with activity ideas, links to a movie, and much more information about Shackleton and his crew.

http://main.wgbh.org/imax/shackleton/pdf/teachgd_lo.pdf

After allowing them a few minutes to browse and write down the website for future reference at home or the library, they will continue working on and finishing their book trailers. When all book trailers are finished, the group will watch them together and offer positive comments and encouragement. A final exit survey will be given, and any final comments and discussions will take place. As a parting gift, the boys will be given two books to continue their reading the rest of the summer.

APPENDIX E
STUDENT EXIT SURVEY

STUDENT # _____

1. I have read _____ books this summer.
2. I feel my reading skills have _____ this summer.
 - a) improved a little
 - b) improved a lot
 - c) stayed the same
3. Since participating in this club, I feel I enjoy reading _____ before.
 - a) more than
 - b) less than
 - c) the same as
4. Did you enjoy this club? Please state as many specific things you can think of that you liked about the club.
5. What are some things you would suggest doing differently to make the club better?
6. Did you read some books you probably wouldn't have read on your own? If so, please list which ones, and whether or not you are glad you read them.
7. What are some books you would suggest reading in a future club?
8. Would you recommend this club to your friends?
9. If given the opportunity, would you participate in this club again?